

FOUNDATIONAL UNITY OF THOUGHT IN GURU NANAK - GURU GOBIND SINGH JI

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Though Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh lived about 200 years apart in different circumstances, they were united by Unity of thought. Both uplifted the masses, promoted human values and religious harmony. They aimed to give the people a life of dignity. Some people think that Guru Gobind Singh, by making it mandatory for the Sikhs to wear the five symbols and by taking arms against the tyrants, had deviated from the path laid down by Guru Nanak who is said to have opposed the symbols and condemned violence. Some misguided Sikh youth say that they are followers of Guru Nanak Dev and not of Guru Gobind Singh. Even some historians think that Guru Nanak never thought of anything else than the saintliness in life, but sword-wielding Guru Gobind Singh turned the Sikh religion into a brotherhood of warriors and soldiers. This may seem contradictory, but actually it is not the case. There is a great misrepresentation of facts. The evolution of the Sikh religion has been misinterpreted. Those who point out this contradiction seem to have either misunderstood the message of Guru Nanak or they have not read the message carefully enough. The spiritual unity of Guru Nanak has never been broken and the spirit of Guru Nanak worked in Guru Gobind Singh.

Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh both thought that our earth was the abode of *Dharma* where one could practice *Dharma*, do acts of righteousness and achieve spiritual excellence. Guru Nanak says: ਰਾਤਿ ਰਾਤਿ ਇਕੱਹ ਵਰ] ਪਵਾਂ ਪਾਵਾਂ ਅਗਲੀ ਪਾਵਾਂ] ਇਕੱਹਿ ਵਿਚ ਦ੍ਰਾਵਿ ਕਿਪ੍ਪੇ ਰਾਕੀ ਦਰਮਾ ਸਾਲ] (ਪੰਨਾ 7) “God has established earth as a home of Dharma in the midst of nights, days, weeks, seasons, wind, water, fire and the nether regions.”

ਏਕੋ ਦਰਮਾ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਾਲੇ] (ਪੰਨਾ 1188)

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“One should remain firm on truth”.

Guru Nanak has, thus, identified *Dharma* with Truth.

Guru Gobind Singh also writes in *Bachitar Natak* that he was sent by the Lord to spread *Dharma*:

hm ieh kuj j gq mo Avey] Drm hq girdv pTvey]

“I have come for the spread of Dharma. My Lord has sent me to spread Dharma”.

Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh both were householders and condemned asceticism. Guru Nanak has advised us not to wander in forests and on the river banks in search of God:

j Ykrrix qit qlrQ j whl] rqn pdwrQ Gt hl mwhl] (p 152)

‘(Oman!) the invaluable jewel(God), in whose search you go to the banks of the streams and holy places, lies in your heart’.

Guru Gobind Singh also liked the life of a householder and has written in the *Dasam Granth*:

rymn Alsokir sInAisw]

bn sy sdn sBkir smJhmn hl mwh adws] (p 1539)

“O mind! Practice renunciation in this way: Consider all the dwellings to be the forest and remain detached at heart”.

Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh both spoke against observing rituals and superstitions, but not against symbols. Symbols and rituals are not synonymous. It is wrong to say that Guru Nanak was against symbols such as *Jeneu*. He was actually against the show of religious symbols without any purity of mind and conduct. He wanted the wearer of the sacred thread to have the qualities of compassion, contentment, modesty and truth. He has said:

dieAw kpwh sKusbuj qugI sqvvtu]

etuj nallj IA k hel q pify Gq] (p 471)

“Make compassion the cotton, contentment the thread, modesty the knot and truth the twist”.

This is the sacred thread of the soul; if you have it, then go ahead and put it on me”.

Guru Nanak was against those Brahmins who enjoyed the privileges of the society and exploited their followers, especially low caste Hindus. They enforced useless and expensive rituals and ceremonies. Guru Nanak wanted to give those arrogant Brahmins a lesson in humility and compassion. In the next quote, Guru Gobind Singh also advised his followers to shun the meaningless rituals

practiced by Brahmins:

j b ieh ghlibprn kl rlq[[
m n krlien kl prqlq[[(srb l h g)

"When the Khalsa adopts rituals of Brahmins, I shall not stand by him".

Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh both believed that rituals had no importance and were repetitive actions done in religious ceremonies, but they also believed that symbols were required as distinguishing marks in a religious system.

Both of them reprimanded those who wore symbols without being virtuous and condemned hypocrisy. Guru Nanak says:

kdl kVbil ml u Kwie] bhmxi nVj IA Gwie] (p 662)

"The Qazi utters falsehood and eats filth. The Brahman slays life and then bathes at the pilgrim stations".

ictij n ky kpVym y icq kTr j lau]
iqn miK nmn abj Yd YivAwpycr j lau] (p 751)

"Those persons who wear white clothes (saintly attire), but have a dirty and ruthless mind, and do not meditate on God, are engrossed in duality; they are thieves".

Guru Gobind Singh proved this point by once having a donkey don the skin of a lion. While the donkey caused terror for a short while, it eventually brayed by sheer habit and was badly beaten. Thus Guru Ji gave a practical demonstration of his conviction.

Both the Gurus preached against idol worship and advised their followers to meditate on omnipresent God. Guru Nanak has said:

pQrul ypl ih mgD gv]
Eih j w Awip fbyqm khw qrxhru] (p 556)

"The ignorant fools pick up stones and worship them. These stones, themselves, sink low. How can they ferry others across (the world ocean)?"

Guru Gobind Singh was also strongly against idol worship. In *Zafar Naama*, a letter in Persian poetry he wrote to Aurangzeb, he calls himself *But Shikan* (breaker of idols).

Definition of God given by Guru Nanak in the beginning of Sri Guru Granth Sahib tallies with that of Guru Gobind Singh given in the next quote taken from *Jaap Sahib*.

c-qRc-kRvrql c-qRc-kRBgqy]
sXBv sBMsrbdw srb j gqy]

"O lord! Thou art present on all the four sides and Thy order prevails

everywhere. Thou art self-existent, beautiful and present in all living beings".

Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Gobind Singh both believed in the equality of mankind and tried to uplift the backward and down-trodden people. Neither of them believed in the caste -system. Guru Nanak Dev preferred to dine with the poor carpenter , Lalo, to dining with Malik Bhago, a big land lord. Guru Gobind Singh baptized five congregants from different castes into a new religion in a ceremony known as '*Khanda di Pahul*'. It is wrong to say that Guru Gobind Singh was against Muslims. Many of them fought for him and people like *Pir Budhu Shah* were his followers. He fought against *Moguls* as well as Hindu hill chiefs when they became unjust and cruel. Guru Nanak writes:

PKV j wql PKV inwau]
SBnw j IAw iekw Cwau] (p1183)

"Pride in social status and personal glory is futile. The same Lord gives shade(support) to all".

Guru Gobind also stressed upon equality of mankind when he wrote in '*Akal Ustat*':

ihw qrik kalln Psl iemim sIPI mns kl j wq sbw ekw pihcwb[
"Some call themselves Hindus while others call themselves Muslims. Some are called Sunnis while some are Shias, but regard all human beings as one and the same".

dhw mslq sel pjw A0invj Eel mns sBw ekw p1Ank ko Brmwa hY]
"The Temple and the Mosque are the same; there is no difference between them. Neither is there any dissimilarity between the Hindu worship and the Muslim namaz(prayer). The whole human race is the same but due to illusion, they appear different".

Both the Gurus were against injustice and cruel kings. Many times, Guru Nanak strongly protested and wrote against the *Pathan* and *Mugol* kings whom he called butchers as recorded in Sri Guru Granth Sahib:

kil kwql ruj ykwswel Drmwpk kir afirAw] (p1145)
"The Dark Age of Kali Yuga is a knife and the kings are the butchers, righteousness (Dharma) has taken wings and flown away".

ruj w inAwau kryhiQ hie]
khk Kdwie n mnkiae] (p11350)

"The ruler administers justice only if his palm is greased. Nobody is moved by the name of God".

ਪਿਪ ਕਿ ਜ ਕਿਬਲ ਹੁਦਿਵੇਅ ਜ ਰਿ ਮਿਦਨੁ ਵਿ ਵਿਓ] (ਪਿੰਨ 722)

"Bringing the marriage party of sin(cruel army), Babar, the Mugol king, invaded from Kabal demanding (our land) as his wedding gift".

ਰਿਜ ਯ ਸਿਹ ਮਿਕਦਮ ਕਿਹ ਜ ਵੀ ਜ ਗਵੈਨੋਬਿਤ੍ਤੀ ਸਿਹ] (ਪਿੰਨ 1288)

"The kings are like tigers and their underlings like dogs; they go out and awaken the sleeping people to harass them".

ਦਿਵਿ ਦਿਵਿਅ ਕਰਿ ਲਿਗ ਅਲੀ ਕਿਰਿ ਚਿਲੀ] (ਪਿੰਨ 1191)

"Temples of the gods are subject to taxes; this is what it has come to be".

Guru Gobind Singh also stood against injustice and took arms when there was no other choice. Aurangzeb, the bigot Mugol king, was bent upon converting every non- Muslim to Islam. Indians had become spineless cowards and lost their self-respect under his terrible reign. To combat Aurangzeb and to restore the dignity and self-respect of the Indian population, Guru Gobind Singh created an army of saint soldiers who were ready to die for the sake of justice and righteousness. He made the uniform containing five symbols compulsory for his saint soldiers. In *Zafarnama*, he writes:

ਚੁਕਵੁ ਅਤ ਹਮਹ ਹਿ ਕਿ ਦਰ ਗੇਸ਼ਕ]

ਹਿ ਵਿ ਅਸ਼ ਬਿਦਨ ਬ ਸਮਿਤ ਦਸ਼] 22]

"When all other means have failed, it is but righteous to take the sword in hand".

No doubt, for this cause he sacrificed his own life, his four sons and thousands of his followers. Guru Gobind Singh used sword only to protect the lowly and weak and punish the unjust. He did not take arms to create a kingdom. His sword was meant to defend and not to offend. Some historians, due to their ignorance of the Sikh philosophy, have misunderstood the implication of the use of the sword by Guru Gobind Singh who had no political ambition. Guru Nanak also advocated sacrifice for a right cause:

ਜ ਆਉਪਿਨ ਕਿ ਕਿ ਚਾਉ] ਇਸ਼ਦਿਰ ਕਿ ਲਿ ਗਿ ਲਿ ਮਿਨ ਆਉ]

ਿਏ ਮਿਨਿਗ ਪਿਨਿਦਰਿਜ ਯ] ਇਸ਼ਦਿਰ ਕਿਵਿਨ ਕਿਜ ਯ] (ਪਿੰਨ 1412)

"If you desire to play the game of love, then step onto my Path with your head in hand .When You place your feet on this path, give me your head, and do not care for the public opinion".

Guru Nanak criticized the Lodhi rulers who failed to protect their subjects when the Mogul Babar invaded India and said:

ਜ ਯ ਸਕਾਵ ਸਕਾ ਕਾਮਿਗ ਕਾ ਮਿਨ ਰਸਿਨ ਹੇਲ]

ਸਕਾਵ ਸਿਹੁਮਿਗ ਪਿਵਗ ਕਸਮਿਸ਼ ਪਿਰਸੇਲ] (ਪਿੰਨ 360)

"When the strong strike the strong, the mind does not grieve, but If a powerful tiger falls on a herd of cattle, the herdsman must show his manliness".

There is nothing in Gurbani which says that Guru Nanak advocated non- violence. As the next quote shows, Guru Nanak made it clear that only prayer was not sufficient to halt evil:

ਕਤਿ ਹਿੰਪਿਰੁ ਵਰਿ ਰਹੈਯ ਵਿਲੁਖਿਆਵਾਵਿਲੇਵਾਵ] (ਪੰਨਾ418)

"Millions of Muslim religious leaders prayed for the halt of (invader) Emperor Babur when they heard of his invasion, but failed".

It is entirely according to the teachings of Guru Nanak that Guru Gobind Singh limited the use of force to right injustice. The torch of Guru Nanak message was carried by Guru Gobind Singh. There is no doubt that Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh both were religious leaders and religion was the foundation of all of their activities. They wanted spiritual development of the people and anything that stood in the way of this was not liked by them. Tyrant rulers pouncing upon the helpless and innocent people had to be dealt with in a befitting manner by the use of sword. Discipline ordained by Guru Nanak and by Guru Gobind Singh was the same. Saint- soldiers were created by Guru Gobind Singh to fight against injustice and to protect the oppressed ones. It was need of the hour to survive in a wholly hostile atmosphere.

Sir Gokal Chand Narang, a famous historian, has rightly written in his book 'Transformation of Sikhism (1960):

*"The seed, which blossomed in the time of Guru Goving Singh, had been sown by (Guru) Nanak and watered by his successors. The sword which carved the *Khalsa*'s way to the glory was undoubtedly, forged by Guru Govind[Singh] , but the steel had been provided by Guru Nanak".(Page 17.)*

JD Cunningham, an eminent historian, in his book, "History of the Sikhs" (1915 edition) has also written in the following quote that Guru Gobind Singh followed in the footsteps of Guru Nanak :

"The last apostle of the Sikhs did not live to see his own ends accomplished, but he effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with a lofty although fitful longing for social freedom and a national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that purity of worship, which had been preached by Nanak".(Page

75.)

We can safely say that Guru Gobind Singh did not deviate from the path laid down by Guru Nanak. When Guru Gobind Singh made symbols mandatory for the *Khalsa*. He also made it compulsory for them to observe the code of conduct that he had enunciated. Guru Gobind Singh never violated the teachings of Guru Nanak. These can be summed up in the injunction: Meditate on God, earn by your own effort, and share your earnings with the less fortunate. Those who find difference between the teachings of Guru Nanak and those of Guru Gobind Singh do not understand that the message was one and the same, it was only the social and political environment that differed. It is consistent with Guru Nanak's teaching that Guru Gobind Singh gave a distinct identity to all Sikhs so that they can be measured against the high ideals taught by Guru Nanak.

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They age not, die not and fall not into hell, only if they meditate on God's Name.

They who utter God's Name, wither not and, O Nanak, nor do they suffer pain.

They who take the Name, look beauteous and reap the fruit of happiness.

They who accept the Name, win the life game.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 438

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